# U.S. EPA's Sustainable Development Challenge Grants

**Background and Purpose:**

U.S. EPA anticipates soliciting proposals for the Sustainable Development Challenge Grants (SDCG) for 1998 in June, 1998. The purpose of this competitive grant program is to encourage community groups, businesses, and government agencies to work together on sustainable development efforts that protect the local environment and conserve natural resources while supporting a healthy economy and an improved quality of life. In particular, EPA is interested in community-based efforts that leverage public and private investments, involve diverse interests in the community, and build partnerships to foster local sustainability endeavors for the long term.

Sustainable development is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable development places equal and integrated emphasis on economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social well-being.

**Grant Program Characteristics and Requirements:**

EPA will fund proposals in two funding categories: (1) $50,000 or less and (2) $50,001 to $200,000. Applicants in each category must provide matching funds of at least 20% of the total project budget.

Eligible applicants include community groups, non-profit organizations, local governments, tribes, and states. Proposals must be able to demonstrate sustainability, community commitment and contribution, and measurable results. Proposals will have to be submitted to the following address 90 days after the Federal Register Notice is published:

EPA's Office of Air and Radiation (MC-6101)
401 M St. SW
Washington, DC 20460

**Projects Funded in 1997 SDCG Program:**

Approximately 1,000 applications were received for the $5,00,000 in funding available in 1997. Forty five projects were funded nationally. Attached are summaries of all 45 projects.

**Contact Information:**

To request an application kits by mail: phone (202) 260-6812 or fax to (202) 260-2555. Please include your name, full address, and phone number. Application kits will NOT be available by fax. To access application kits via the Internet: http://www.epa.gov/ecocommunity
For additional information, contact the EPA Region 6 Office in Dallas:

Karen Alvarez phone: (214) 665-7273 E-mail: alvarez.karen@epamail.epa.gov

**Sustainable Development Challenge Grants**
**FY 1997 Projects**

**Fish for the Future (Oregon)**: This project takes a comprehensive approach to restoring the Oregon South Coast salmon runs. It targets landowners (primarily farmers and ranchers) to protect fish habitat/riparian corridors through their land. Conducts "in-stream" restoration work, and initiates a "watershed stewards" effort in the schools and community. Protection efforts are strongly linked to the successful development of a local eco-tourism industry. The partnership is well-developed, involving the Conservation District, Watershed Council, Local Government, High School, University Extension Agent, and Oregon Fish and Wildlife. Salmon have decreased in this area due to high nutrient loadings and overharvesting. Components of this project will work with the private landowners to reduce loadings through planting trees in riparian areas and fencing cattle farther away from streams.

**Metropolitan Kansas City Area Sustainable Land Use Initiative (Missouri)**: Regional Land use and zoning principles that embody the standards of sustainability will be developed and used as examples for local governments. This project will address current land use issues which such as sprawl which have increased vehicle miles traveled and contributed to increased air quality problems.

**Coastal Georgia Greenway (Georgia)**: A series of 480 miles of multi-use greenway paths will be developed through the eight county Coastal Georgia Region and will contribute to non-polluting economic development by promoting eco-tourism within natural and historical settings. By linking towns and major natural, recreational, educational and historic sites, the estimated annual gross revenues and new jobs will increase, providing economic sustainability for these small towns along the greenway.

**Demonstrating the Environmental, Social and Economic Benefits of Alternative Development Patterns (Maryland)**: This project will focus on a specific parcel of land and clearly demonstrate that a carefully designed alternative development can be profitable to the public and also protect the environment. This project will also demonstrate the how local zoning codes and building practices shape future growth and how they can be improved.

**Park Duvalle: Building a Sustainable Community from the Ground Up (Kentucky)**: Park Duvalle is an inner city housing community in Louisville, Kentucky, east of Rubbertown. The project area was designated as an Empowerment Zone in 1994. The City of Louisville Housing Authority will demolish and replace two large public housing projects with 1,100 new homes, townhouses and apartments. While this project rebuilds the physical community, economic development, pollution prevention and environmental sustainability are not specifically addressed. The area is adversely impacted by poor air quality, odors, contaminated city lakes, abandoned industrial and commercial sites and illegal dumping. An existing community organization plans to involve residents in the development of remedies for problems related to inadequate economic opportunities, transportation networks that do not meet the needs of residents, poor access to health care and improved access to food markets and retail business

establishments.

**Towards a Sustainable Tax Policy (Massachusetts)**: The Metropolitan Area Council will come up with solutions to address sprawl in New England, including mechanisms to promote a regional approach to sharing taxes and directing growth to the most appropriate areas of the region, and alternatives to the current system in which property taxes are major source of local revenue. Results will include a usable tool and plan for promotion and distribution and will be available throughout New England.

**Grow Smart Rhode Island (Rhode Island)**: This project addresses a critical non-sustainable behavior, sprawl, in New England. Their goals are to minimize unplanned, low density, single use development in rural parts of the state and stop the declining vitality of the urban centers. This is the first effort to combine the business community's support and economic expertise with the energy and community outreach capabilities of nonprofit organizations.

**San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners** (SLUG) **(California)**: The project will link SLUG's existing programs in three public housing communities in San Francisco to create a cohesive sustainable community development model. The model will be used in Bayview/Hunters Point, Visitacion Valley, Potrero Hill and Bernal Heights. The project will address low-income resident self-reliance, urban habitat restoration, urban environmental education, community food security, and low-income community enterprise through SLUG's job training efforts, habitat restoration activities, urban garden projects, and sales of "Urban Herbals," compost, and landscaping materials and services.

**Watershed to Woodshop: Ecosystem-Based Business Association (California)**: This project will develop an extensive business network based on ecologically sound management of forests and timber resources in rural northwest California. Nonsustainable timber extraction in Northwest California has resulted in the loss of fish and wildlife habitat, degradation of water quality, soil erosion, reduced species diversity, unemployment and community conflict. This network is comprised of landowners, loggers, processors, manufacturers, wood-based businesses, distributors, and consumers and will provide a means for exchanging technical and market information related to sustainable forest management.

**Repairing Older Suburbs in the LA Metropolitan Area (California)**: This project aims to repair older suburban cities that suffer environmental, economic, and social ills because of auto-dependent land use and transportation planning practiced in suburbs since World War II, and growth patterns that continue to create new suburbs on the urban fringe. It will work with five diverse, geographically distributed cities in the LA area to test strategies that address revitalization of suburban downtowns and retrofitting of commercial streets and transportation corridors to show how downtowns can be environmentally, economically, and socially attractive. The project will develop specific plans for each city and will document demonstration projects in a "how-to" guide that will be widely distributed.

**San Elizario Energy-Efficient Housing Community Revitalization (Texas)**: Organization Progresiva de San Elizario, a non-profit 501(c)(3) community development corporation in the State of Texas, will manage a community development project designed to construct four passive

solar energy homes in the community. The program will emphasize self-help resident labor to construct homes, rather than contract labor, and a training program designed to give at-risk youth a chance to develop marketable job skills with wide applicability within the community. This area is one of the colonias, lacking water and sewage infrastructure and suffers from substandard housing, resulting in health risks.

**Integration of Environmental Protection, Economic Prosperity, and Community Well-Being (Oregon)**: A strong and diverse group of partners will demonstrate sustainable building alternatives by constructing a 1,760 sq. ft. straw bale high school classroom. Benefits include reduced air pollution, energy savings, less reliance on timber, and use of waste grain from nearby agricultural operations. The involvement of high school students in the construction will provide hands-on sustainability education, and the resulting structure will showcase straw bale construction to the larger community of Ashland, Oregon. Final stages of the project will examine the viability of straw bale construction for application in an affordable housing effort, similar to the Habitat for Humanity's model.

**Acid Mine Drainage (Pennsylvania)**: 3430 miles of stream are contaminated by acid mine drainage (AMD) which has seriously degraded habitat and economic activities. This proposal merges treatment with art to create attractive treatment systems which restore the environment -- and the economic use of these waterways (now called eco-tourism) in a way which captures the eye and the imagination. The results will be improved water quality and the reintroduction of species of wildlife and fish to this ecosystem.

**Phillips Enterprise Community Deconstruction Project (Minnesota)**: The deconstruction of 15 residential and commercial structures will be linked with construction of 51 units of new housing and 64,000 square feet of mixed use industrial space. Jobs will be created by hiring and training a deconstruction crew and material not reused in the housing or industrial projects will be sold at the ReUse Center, a retail store that sells salvaged, reusable building materials. The deconstruction site, new housing and industrial space, ReUse Center and project partners are all located in the Phillips neighborhood Enterprise Community zone of Minneapolis. In addition to deconstructing 15 residential and commercial structures to make room for 51 new units of housing an industrial space, attempts will be made to establish permanent crews skilled in this area and a ReUse Center. Thus it seeks to foster a habitual "deconstruction mentality" in this Minneapolis urban area, in which these crews will constitute a sustainable business even as waste volume is decreased through reuse or resale of used items.

**The Cleveland EcoVillage: A Demonstration of Urban Sustainability & Regeneration (Ohio)**: This presents a demonstration project at a long neglected rapid transit station that unites the latest Green Building ideas (energy efficiency, passive solar design, nontoxic building materials, considerations of life-cycle costs, wastewater treatment with living machines) with the new urban movement (pedestrian-friendly streets, mixed-uses, proximity to transit, urban green space). It (1) demonstrates how the above ideas can be incorporated into an older city with an economic and environmental legacy of de-industrialization, unemployment and pollution, (2) explores building codes and their impact on green building applications, and (3) builds relationships with non-traditional partners such as utilities and lending institutions to develop "green mortgages," "location efficient mortgages," and other innovative funding streams to

support environmental investments.

**Hawaii Forestry Communities Initiative (Hawaii)**: Lowland Rain Forests for Ookala - This project will restore a lowland native rainforest on the Hamakua Coast of Hawaii in an area formerly used for sugar cane production. It aims to stabilize the site to minimize soil erosion and reduce non-point source pollution, use community expertise and involve native Hawaiians in restoration of the site as a native rainforest, and plant and harvest high value tropical hardwood for use in a community-based craftwood industry. The project will address important environmental/economic concerns for the Islands--reuse of former sugar cane land and establishment of sustainable forestry industry.

**Sustainable Island-Based Development (Hawaii)**: The project uses a community-based process to prepare a regional sustainability plan for the Ewa and North Shore regions of Honolulu. Efforts will focus on building community capacity to carry out sustainable development initiatives; preserving agriculture; and protecting the environment while establishing a sustainable economic base. Feasibility analyses of specific community economic development strategies and projects will be conducted, leading to demonstration projects. This project demonstrates a clear understanding of sustainability and the need to develop a sustainable economic base that protects/enhances the environment and focuses on building community capacity to implement sustainable development strategies.

**Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe Sustainable Development Challenge Grant Proposal (North Dakota)**: This project proposes solutions to the human, ecological, and economic impacts of rising water levels in Spirit Lake. Both flooding and poor natural resource management have devastated the tribe. Through education, zoning, economic initiatives, wellhead protection and environmental regulation, plans for development at unsuitable areas (well and septic abandonment) will be shifted to development in ecologically suitable areas, which will be identified in the project.

**North Riverfront Sustainable Communities (Missouri)**: The goal of this project is promotion of eco-tourism in a low-income area in St. Louis. Under the leadership of the University of Missouri's School of Natural Resources, residents will develop, build and operate a community native plant nursery. The nursery will utilize the eco-tourism developments and the newly formed Riverfront Trail greenway as a field study site and a marketing source.

**Expanding and Sustaining the Shellfisheries of Casco Bay, Maine (Maine)**: Management of shellfish will be improved by: 1) eliminating existing sources of bacterial contamination in the Bay, 2) preventing new sources, and 3) achieving sustainable shellfish harvests. There is a strong coalition of partners that includes local governments, state agencies, environmental groups and shellfishermen. In addition to addressing environmental and economic issues, this project addresses a key measure of community well-being in coastal towns - viewing harvest closure signs posted along the shore as a decline in quality of life.

**Revegetation and Development of Public Open Space on Nine Mile Run Site (Pennsylvania)**: This project will restore a landfill from a traditional rust belt industry to encourage return to the city as a green space and for quality residential living. Pressure for

suburban sprawl will be alleviated by addressing issues associated with combined sewer overflows.

**Northeast Stewardship Project Natural Resources Center (Vermont)**: This is a grassroots solution to a major sustainability issue - how to keep forestry practices sustainable, and produce sufficient economic return for the community (e.g., by encouraging businesses that make local wood products, instead of simply shipping the raw materials out of the region).

**Technical Assistance to Promote Sustainable Development in the Pawcatuck Watershed (Rhode Island)**: This project will produce tangible products and result in changes by exploring the use of transfer of development rights (TDR), which are not used in Rhode Island yet (a local model where they have been used successfully is much needed). The Pawcatuck watershed is experiencing unprecedented growth and has been identified as one of Rhode Island's most important natural resource areas through the Resource Protection Project. This builds on previous investments which helped organized the Pawcatuck Watershed Partnership which has gained substantial momentum and brought disparate interests together (in particular, the farmers and environmentalists).

**Valley VitalSigns: A Regional Sustainability Indicators Demonstration Project (Vermont)**: This project builds on previous work in New England that has been used as a model with other communities. This specific project will move beyond developing a set of indicators to adoption by various groups that will commit to measuring them.

**Rome Sand Plains Management Partnership (New York)**: The Rome Sand Plains are clearly an outstanding natural feature located within the City limits of Rome, which is one of central New York's largest cities. There is a lack of public awareness of the ecological importance of this site, which at one time adjoined the shoreline of Lake Iroquois, the glacial ancestor of Lake Ontario. Educational and outreach material will be developed to increase awareness of the importance of this natural resource. Historically this area has been viewed as worthy only for sand deposits. Sand mining is one of the largest threats to the Sand Plains. Household trash, construction debris, and old automobiles have been dumped here as well. This area is valued for the unusual wetland communities that lie between the dunes, which harbor a diverse mix of plants and animals. This project will attempt to enhance and protect this area by developing the existing informal and privately owned network of trails at the Sand Plains into a publicly owned, well-maintained and clearly marked trail system.

**Sustainable Community Builder/Developer Certification Program (Virginia)**: Environmental benefits of an EcoVillage in Loudoun County, Virginia will be the focus for this project. A course outline for the Sustainable Community Builder/Developer Certification will be developed which will insure high quality standards and performance in the land development and construction process. This provides an alternative to the current development patterns in the Washington DC metropolitan area which currently is turning into town house developments, strip malls and massive highways and parking lots to accommodate transportation issues. The program will first be offered in the Washington metropolitan area and then offered nationwide though such strategic partners as the local home builders associations.

**Use of Rain Detention Gardens to Increase the Quality and Decrease Quantity of Stormwater Runoff in Urban Areas (Delaware)**: This project addresses the environmental and aesthetic issues of storm water that retention systems as an engineering answer do not. Stormwater runoff is a substantial problem in this region of the United States. As impervious surface increases, the environmental impacts of large slugs of freshwater into estuarine systems, the deposition of nutrients, suspended solids and toxics into waterways, and the scouring impacts on aquatic habitats becomes more severe. Creating habitats and aesthetics restores the urban sense of productivity and well-being. These are crucial in returning jobs and residents to the urban environment.

**Environmental, Economic & Community Benefits Associated with Conservation Design Development in Newton County, Georgia (Georgia)**: The necessary tools will be provided to address the problem of urban sprawl and industrial development that has been rapidly occurring in the metropolitan Atlanta region. Data will be collected and analyzed to create a potential strategies "menu". The alternative strategies "menu" will not only be based upon concrete data, but factor in to economics of the communities, the regional and local political agendas and the regulatory and non-regulatory environmental concerns. With this knowledge, educated decisions for promoting economic sustainability and environmental quality can be made when planning new communities and restoring older ones.

**Farm Beginnings-Ecologically Sound Livestock & Rural Development (Minnesota)**: Sustainable development for rural communities will be achieved by balancing industrialized agricultural practices that rely heavily on fossil fuels and intensive mechanization with alternative farming methods that encourage small to mid-size farming, are compatible with the fragile ecosystems, and foster less reliance on energy use and waste treatment. This project also promotes and assists farming as a viable profession for new and existing farmers and young people.

**Building Sustainable Forest Economies in Appalachian Ohio (Ohio):** The goal of the Sustainable Forest Economies Project is to transition toward sustainable utilization and marketing of forest resources, especially specialty woods and non-timber products, as part of a sustainable regional economy in Appalachian Ohio. The project will increase the economic contribution of the forest sector in the region while reducing unsustainable practices such as exhaustive harvesting of timber species and non-timber products like ginseng and goldenseal. By reducing unsustainable practices, negative environmental impacts such as erosion, degradation of streams and waterways, and non-point source pollution will also be addressed.

**Establishing a Learning Community in Watersheds Impacted by the Poultry Growing Region in Northwest Arkansas (Arkansas)**: The goal of the project is to develop a learning process where producers will develop and implement whole farm management plans. The three objectives will be: (1) preserve the declining options in farming; (2) insure better land stewardship; and (3) improve water quality. At least twenty local producers in a Master Graziers Program will contribute time back to their community via "farmers training farmers" activities.

**Bull Creek Watershed Project (Texas)**: This project is a public-private partnership approach to plan for the health of the natural and cultural resources within the watershed. One of the two most significant benefits of the Bull Creek Watershed Project is an increased awareness of the people who live and work in the watershed about the key natural resources issues and what individuals can do to create a sustainable watershed. The other is the increased cooperation and ongoing coalition among city, county, regional, state, and federal officials as well as businesses and community organizations to achieve common goals within the watershed.

**Tensas Pride (Louisiana)**: By establishing a non-profit seedling nursery in the Tensas River Basin of Northeast Louisiana, Tensas PRIDE intends to teach landowners and other community residents methods to re-establish ancient ecology of hardwood forests. This project provides economic, social, ecological and environmental benefits by improving wildlife habitat, air and water quality, reducing soil erosion, increase property values, and providing no-consumptive recreational and ecotourism income opportunities along with wood products and much needed job opportunities. The seedling nursery will provide employment opportunities for harvesters after the November through March peak period.

**A Diversification Strategy for the Ramah Navajo Community (New Mexico)**: The Twseiklin Community Development Corporation (CDC) will develop a diversification strategy for the Ramah Navajo Community Agriculture Enterprise designed to promote the development and commercialization of value-added, sustainable agricultural products, processes, and enterprises. This will be achieved through incorporating expected cropping patterns, livestock enterprises, community based agriculture development, and related processing activities.

**Heartland Network (Kansas)**: Establishment of this network will organize farmers and ranchers into local clusters to learn and practice whole-farm planning skills. The aim is to integrate profitability and environmental protection on locally owned farms in rural communities. This project is unique to this largely agriculturally-based region.

**Partners in Grassroots Change (Kansas)**: This project will facilitate a community visioning process and develop quality of life indicators which has been tailored to the unique environmental, economic and social context of a small Midwestern community. A unique opportunity exists to redirect key community planning documents and future economic development initiatives within a framework of sustainability.

**Sustainable Partnerships in Local Land Use Planning (North Dakota)**: This project will deal with the management of land use within areas recently devastated by 100-500 year floods in North Dakota. Solid township support as the benefits of future township dislocations will be environmentally and economically available to entire communities. This project will implement a comprehensive educational program designed to assist the townships in reviewing and implementing agricultural and flood plain building permits.

**Business Strategies for a Sustainable Future (Colorado)**: This project demonstrates unique partnering with local urban Rotary Club to identify barriers to “green” choices among members.

Solutions will be developed and promoted to reach the business community through training, workshops and case studies.

**Mending Community and the Environment (Montana)**: This project will focus on efforts to overcome resistance to change through community-building efforts at ecosystem awareness within the Flathead River Basin. These efforts reflect the need to change awareness to enable behavioral changes. This is one of the richest and most pristine areas in the country.

**Great Plains Partnership/High Plains Partnership for Species at Risk (Colorado)**: This project aims to build consensus in support of demonstration areas where ranching and healthy wildlife coexistence is achievable. Consensus will be among a diverse group of partners (State, private sector, Federal) which have been traditionally divergent on behalf of restoration of rangeland health across a five state area.

**White Mountain Apache Tribal Guide Training Program (Arizona)**: A tribal guide training program will be established that provides tribal members with the skills and training to become qualified naturalist and cultural guides on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. The guide training program would illustrate the need and importance of preserving the integrity of the Reservations's cultural and natural resources; create much needed jobs and economic opportunity, and monitor, control, and mitigate visitor impacts to the reservation landscape.

**Inimim Forest Implementation Plan (California)**: A plan will be developed for implementation of sustainable forest management practices in the Inimim forest for the next 10, 50, and 200 years. It will build on the existing forest management plan which provides a vision for management of the forest that protects the watershed and establishes an environmentally sound, community based, long term forest products industry. The project will conduct a watershed analysis and develop an implementation plan to identify areas to be protected, calculate sustainable timber yield, plan haul routes, develop prescribed fire plans, and conduct outreach. The plan will be one of the first biologically sustainable forest plans created by a community for its surrounding public lands.

**Closing the Loop (Oregon)**: This effort will help three communities in the Hood River area of Oregon to begin to develop closed-loop economies by identifying local waste streams and turning them into new end uses. This inventory will result in more environmentally-sound business opportunities, by increasing the amount of reuse, recycling, and remanufacturing. Tasks to be conducted include: analysis of potential bioproducts from fibers, oil seeds, and starches, assessments of existing waste streams, market and financial analysis, and publishing of a "how-to" manual.

**Community Bicycle Shop (Washington)**: An important community service will be provided to an inner city neighborhood (Columbia City), which currently has no bicycle sales/repair shops. This project takes sustainability to a neighborhood level by building a highly innovative non-profit alternative transportation (bicycle) business. The Free Ride Zone will operate a number of programs, including "earn-a-bike," which teaches youth 8-18 years old to repair and safely ride bicycles. Youths "earn" their own recycled bike when they complete the program. The enterprise created has a strong potential to be self-sustaining, as revenues will be generated.

**Tongass Forest Products Cooperative (Alaska)**: This project will create a forest products cooperative of small businesses/cottage industries, that can maximize the use of forest resources through local value-added processing. The owners and operators of small forest products businesses in Sitka will join with federal, city, and tribal governments, environmental groups, business organizations, and others to encourage growth of jobs using forest resources in a sustainable manner. This responds to the 1993 pulp mill closure in Sitka that resulted in 400 jobs lost.